DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 122 219 CS 002 574

AUTHOR Pine, Mary A.
TITLE Self Concept, Informal Education, and Reading Achievement in Grade One.
PUB DATE 76
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of International Reading Association (21st, Anaheim, California, May 1976)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Activity Learning; Grade 1; *Learning Activities; Primary Education; *Reading Achievement; *Reading Instruction; *Reading Research; *Self Concept; *Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate and describe the relationships between and among classroom organization, self-concept, and reading achievement. Of the 12 classrooms used in the sample, six were organized according to traditional patterns, six were activity-centered. Traditional classrooms were those in which the curriculum and instructional program were determined by the teacher to the degree that the children had to adjust themselves to it. Activity-centered classrooms were those in which instruction was geared to meet individual needs, and in which play was perceived as a valuable learning experience. The total sample was administered the Murphy-Durrell Reading Readiness Analysis, the Thomas Self-Concept Values Test, the reading subtests of the Metropolitan Achievement Test, and the Pintner Cunningham Primary Test. From the findings, it was concluded that activity-centered informal education enhances students' self-concept and produces reading achievement scores equal to or higher than those obtained by children in traditional first grade classroom. (TS)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED122212

Mary A. Pine
Assistant Professor of Education
College of Education
Bailey Hall
University of Maine at Portland-Gorham
Gorham, Maine

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Mary A. Pine
TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER

Self Concept, Informal Education, and Reading Achievement In Grade One

1976 IRA Convention Research Report

CS 002 574

Introduction

Many American educators influenced by the British Infant Schools have adopted an informal approach to classroom organization, but without a strong research base. In these days of accountability, with critics of informal education demanding "back to basics," it is imperative that research be conducted to determine the effectiveness of the informal approach to teaching young children to read. This study is viewed as one contribution in addressing the broad question of self-concept, informal education, and reading achievement.

Self-Concept and Reading Achievement

Since the early 1960s one notes the development of a definite interest in the area of self-concept and reading achievement. The following considerations are suggested as explanations of this trend:

(1) increased writing and research on the phenomenon of the self-concept as exhibited in the works of such psychologists as Maslow (22), Rogers (28), Hamachek (17), Combs and Snygg (8);

(2) a growing recognition of the fact that emotions and personality are merely manifestations of the self-concept;

(3) a resultant appreciation of the fact that more emphasis should be placed on the child in the reading process.

A number of investigations have been conducted with children in grades three through nine which support the finding that a relationship exists between self-concept and reading achievement (16), (3), (21),

(35), (4), (2), (31), (39), (44), (15), (9), (37). Taken as a whole this research indicates that children who are successful in reading have positive self-concepts, while the antithesis is true of unsuccessful readers. In contrast only two investigations conducted during this same period of time with children of the same age levels refute these findings (25), (32).

By comparison the number of investigations using younger children as subjects is minimal and their findings are in conflict with the results of the research conducted with older children. Both Ruhly (30) in her work with second graders and Lewis (20), who used first graders as subjects, failed to find a significant difference between the self-concept scores of successful and unsuccessful readers. Two longitudinal studies (19), (41) have suggested the possibility of a cause and effect relationship between self concept and reading achievement but a more recent study (43) found that self-concept scores failed to add to predictability of either first or second grade reading achievement beyond the prediction of intelligence or readiness scores.

Reading Achievement, Self-Concept, and the Activity-Centered Classroom

There is an apparent paucity of research on the topic of reading achievement in the type of activity-centered classrooms which follow the British Infant School model. Most of the available research comes from England where informal education has been in existence since the end of World War II.

The Central Advisory Council's review of primary education in England entitled Children and Their Primary Schools (7) presented data which

indicated a steady and consistent upward trend in reading scores from 1948 to 1964. This study substantiated the findings of the earlier and more limited investigations of Gardner (12) and Warburton (40) who concluded that children who attended informal schools surpassed their peers who attended formal schools in reading.

The research of Harckman (18) supported the outcomes of the Central Advisory Council study. However, the findings of three investigations question the results of the research cited above. Morris (23) concluded that good reading achievement is associated with a formal approach to reading and a particular emphasis on phonics. Cane and Smithers (6) found that initial reading success was not achieved in the informal classrooms. Finally, the National Foundation Reading Survey (36) indicates that in contrast to the earlier statements of the Central Advisory Committee average test scores are now falling off. One result of these findings is that the Secretary of State of Education (34) has created a special committee to investigate the teaching of reading.

While many (5), (29), (33), (42), (1) have stated that an informal approach to education enhances the total development of the child, the writer has been unable to locate research which investigates either the nature of the relationship between self-concept and informal education or the nature of the relationship between self-concept, informal education and reading achievement.

Nonetheless, the fact remains that many American educators are incorporating the informal approach as modeled after the British infant

Schools without knowledge of its effect on the American child's self-concept or his reading achievement. This approach to education has attracted considerable public attention and it is obvious that research on the informal approach ought to be a high priority. An empirical comparison of the informal activity-centered approach with the traditional approach to classroom organization would have heuristic value in generating new perspectives on the teaching of reading and the enrichment of the self-concept.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate and describe the relationships between and among classroom organization, self-concept and reading achievement. The study sought to obtain answers to the following questions: (1) What is the relationship between pre self-concept and reading readiness? (2) What is the relationship between pre self-concept and reading achievement? 2a. What is the interaction effect on pre self-concept and classroom organization on reading achievement? (3) What is the relationship between reading achievement and post self-concept? (4) Will there be a difference between the post self-concept scores of children in the activity-centered classrooms and the post self-concept scores of children in the traditional classrooms? 4a. Will there be a difference between the post self-concept scores children with high reading achievement scores and the post self-concept scores of children with low reading achievement scores? 4b. What is the interaction effect of classroom organization and reading achievement on post self-

concept? (5) What is the interaction effect of classroom organization and reading readiness on reading achievement? 5a. Will there be a difference between the reading achievement scores of children in the activity-centered classroom and the reading achievement scores of children in the traditional classrooms? 5b. Will there be a difference between the reading achievement scores of those children who have high post self-concept scores and the reading achievement scores of those children who have low post self-concept scores? 5c. What is the interaction effect of classroom organization and post self-concept on reading achievement?

Sample

Twelve first grade classrooms located in the states of New Hampshire or Maine were selected. Of the twelve classrooms six were organized according to traditional patterns, six were activity-centered. Traditional Classrooms were defined as classrooms in which the curriculum and the instructional program are determined and prescribed by the teacher to the degree that the children must adjust themselves to the curriculum and program. These classrooms are more curriculum oriented than child-centered. Activity-Centered Classrooms were defined as classrooms in which instruction is carefully geared to meet the individual needs and abilities of children; in which play is perceived as a valuable learning experience; which is more child and project centered than teacher dominated; in which the child has the freedom to pursue his own interests, make decisions, explore and discover within the parameters of a curricu-

lum designed to meet his needs. These classrooms are frequently referred to as informal and are modeled after the British Infants Schools. Of the total sample of 257 children, 124 were in the traditional classrooms and 133 were in the activity-centered classrooms. There were no significant differences between the two groups of children on the variables of age, sex, and IQ.

Method

The total sample of 257 children was administered:

(1) The Murphy-Durrell Reading Readiness Analysis (24) at the beginning of the school year. Scores at or above the fiftieth percentile were defined as high; scores below the fiftieth percentile were defined as low.

(2) The Thomas Self-Concept Values Test (38) at the beginning of the school year to obtain a pre self-concept measure and at the end of the school year to obtain a post self-concept measure. Scores at or above the fiftieth percentile were defined as high; scores below the fiftieth percentile were defined as low.

(3) The reading subtests of the Metropolitan Achievement Tests (10) at the end of the school year to obtain a reading achievement score. Scores at or above the fiftieth percentile were defined as high; scores below the fiftieth percentile were defined as low.

(4) The Pintner Cunningham Primary Test (26) to obtain an intelligence quotient measure. To control the data for the variables of teacher personality and materials available for purposes of reading instruc-

tion, each teacher completed (1) a pre and post testing on The Adjective Check List (14) and (2) an inventory of the types of materials which were either in her classroom or available in the school for purposes of reading instruction.

In addition, two informal and three formal observational visits were made by the investigator to each classroom while the study was in progress to assure that each teacher was adhering to her organizational structure.

The quantifiable data were analyzed through Pearson product-moment correlation, analysis of variance, and analysis of covariance. Garrett's (13) Table, "F-ratios for .05 and .01 levels of significance," was used to determine significance between means.

Findings

(1) There was no significant relationship between: (a) pre self-concept and reading readiness; (b) pre self-concept and reading achievement; or (c) post self-concept and reading achievement. Correlations ranged from -.17 to +.04.

(2) There was no significant difference between the post self-concept scores of children with high reading achievement scores and the post self-concept scores of children with low reading achievement scores. However, the data did indicate a significant difference at the .05 level between the post self-concept scores of the children in the activity-centered classrooms and the post self-concept scores of the children in the traditional classrooms. $F = 4.48, 5.63$, and 5.35. These data favored the activity-centered classrooms.

(3) Although there was no significant difference between the observed reading achievement scores of the children in each type of classroom, the data did indicate that the children in the activity-centered classrooms obtained slightly higher adjusted reading achievement scores (57.81 - 55.52) when reading readiness was held in control. A similar difference, favoring the activity-centered classrooms, was also found (57.88 - 55.81) when pre self-concept was the covariate.

(4) There was no significant interaction effect of classroom organization and pre self-concept on reading achievement. However, the data indicated that pre self-concept has a strong effect on reading achievement with a P = .09, F (1, 252) = 2.87.

(5) Although there was no significant interaction effect of classroom organization and reading readiness on reading achievement, it was found that the variable of reading readiness had a significant main effect on reading achievement with a P = .005, F (1, 252) = 7.957.

(6) There was no significant interaction effect of classroom organization and post self-concept on reading achievement. However, it was found that the interaction effect of classroom organization and post self-concept had a strong effect on reading achievement with a P = .09 favoring the activity-centered, high post self-concept group which showed the higher adjusted mean reading achievement score F (1, 252) = 2.89. Classroom organization was also found to have a strong effect with a P = .13 favoring the activity-centered classrooms which showed the higher adjusted mean reading achievement score F (1, 252) = 2.30.

(7) There was a significant interaction effect at the .05 level of classroom organization and reading achievement on post self-concept F (1, 252) = 4.97. The variable of classroom organization was found to have a significant main effect, at the .05 level, on post self-concept F (1, 252) = 3.78. These data favored the activity-centered classrooms.

Conclusions

Since this investigation supports the hypothesis that, within the scope of this study, activity-centered, informal education enhances the self-concept and produces reading achievement scores equal to or slightly higher than those obtained by children in traditional classrooms, first grade teachers may consider this approach to classroom organization a viable alternative.

It must be recognized, however, that the activity-centered classrooms which were utilized in this investigation were carefully planned, well-organized, and functioning at a high degree of excellence. Their effectiveness was likely due to the fact that the teachers in these classrooms were not only well trained in and committed to the philosophy of informal education, but also knowledgeable of a wide variety of approaches which can be implemented in translating the theory of informal education into practice. In addition, it is extremely important to note that these teachers voluntarily chose to implement this approach and availed themselves of a university program which assisted them in that endeavor.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Barth, Roland S. Open Education and the American School. New York: Schocken Books, 1972.

2. Blackman, George J. "A Clinical Study of the Personality Structure and Adjustment of Pupils Underachieving and Overachieving in Reading." Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, 1965.

3. Bodwin, Ramond. "The Relationship between Immature Self-Concept and Certain Emotional Disabilities," Dissertation Abstracts, 19, Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, A Xerox Company, 1967-1968, pp. 1645-1646.

4. Bricklin, Patricia. "Self-Related Concepts and Aspiration Behavior of Achieving Readers and Two Types of Non-Achieving Readers," Dissertation Abstracts, 26, Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, A Xerox Company, 1965, p. 3484.

5. Brown, Mary and Precious, Norman. The Integrated Day in the Primary School. London: Ward Lock Educational Publishers, 1968.

6. Cane, Brian and Smithers, Jane. The Roots of Reading. Slough: National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales, 1971.

7. Central Advisory Council for Education (England). Children and Their Primary Schools, Vol. 1. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1967.

8. Combs, Arthur and Snygg, Donald. Individual Behavior: A Perceptual Point of View. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959.

9. Cummings, Ruby N. "A Study of the Relationship between Self-Concept and Reading Achievement at the Third Grade Level," Dissertation Abstracts, 31, Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, A Xerox Company, 1970-1971, p. 5195-A.

10. Durost, Walter N., et al. Metropolitan Achievement Tests, Revised Edition, Primary I, Form F. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1970.

11. Gardner, Dorothy E.M. Experiment and Tradition in Primary Schools. London: Methuen, 1966.

12. _____. Long Term Results of Infant School Methods. London: Methuen, 1950.

13. Garrett, Henry E. Elementary Statistics. New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1965.

14. Gough, Harrison G. and Heilburn, Alfred B. The Adjective Check List. Palo Alto, California: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1952.

15. Hake, James M. "Covert Motivation of Good and Poor Readers," The Reading Teacher, May 1969, 22, 731-738, 741.

16. Hallock, George A. "Attitudinal Factors Affecting Achievement in Reading," Dissertation Abstracts, 18, Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, A Xerox Company, 1958, p. 2061.

17. Hamachek, Don E. Encounters with the Self. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1971.

18. Harckman, Laura D. The Effect of Informal and Formal British Infant Schools on Reading Achievement. Bethesda, Maryland: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 062 011, 1972.

19. Lamy, Mary. "Relationship of Self-Perceptions of Early Primary Children to Achievement in Reading," Dissertation Abstracts, 24, Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, A Xerox Company, 1963, pp. 628-629.

20. Lewis, Ruth W. "The Relationship of Self-Concept to Reading Achievement," Dissertation Abstracts, 34, Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, A Xerox Company, 1974, p. 3839-A.

21. Lumpkin, Donovan. "The Relationship of Self-Concept to Achievement in Reading," Dissertation Abstracts, 19, Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, A Xerox Company, 1959, pp. 204-205.

22. Maslow, Abraham. Motivation and Personality. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959.

23. Morris, Joyce M. Reading in the Primary School. London: Newnes, 1959.

24. Murphy, Helen A. and Durrell, Donald D. Murphy-Durrell Reading Readiness Analysis. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1965.

25. Nicholson, Liston D. "The Relationship between Self-Concept and Reading Achievement," Dissertation Abstracts, 25, Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, A Xerox Company, 1965, p. 6063.

26. Pintner, Rudolph; Cunningham, Bess V.; and Durost, Walter N. Pintner-Cunningham Primary Test, Revised Edition, Form A. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1964.

27. Purkey, William W. Self-Concept and School Achievement. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970.

28. Rogers, Carl R. Client Centered Therapy: Its Current Practice, Implications and Theory. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1951.

29. _____. Freedom to Learn. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1969.

30. Ruhly, Velma M. "A Study of the Relationship of Self-Concept, Socioeconomic Background and Psycholinguistic Abilities to Reading Achievement of Second Grade Males Residing in a Suburban Area," Dissertation Abstracts, 31, Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, A Xerox Company, 1971, p. 4560-A.

31. Schwykart, Frederick. "Explorations of the Self-Concept of Retarded Readers in Relation to Reading Achievement," Dissertation Abstracts, 28, Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, A Xerox Company, 1967-1968, p. 1218-A.

32. Sedarat, Massir. "Relationship of Achievement Motive, Ego Strength and Certain Aspects of Word Association to the Reading Ability of Intellectually Superior Pupils," Dissertation Abstracts, 28, Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, A Xerox Company, 1968, p. 4202-A.

33. Silberman, Charles E. Crisis in the Classroom. New York: Random House, 1970.

34. Southgate, Vera. "The Language Arts in Informal British Primary Classrooms," The Reading Teacher, January 1973, 26, 367-373.

35. Spilola, Rose Frances. "An Investigation into Seven Correlates of Reading Achievement Including Self-Concept," Dissertation Abstracts, 21, Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, A Xerox Company, 1961, p. 2199.

36. Start, K.B. and Wells, B.K. The Trend of Reading Standards. Slough: National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales, 1972.

37. Swartz, Darlene J. The Relationship of Self-Esteem to Reading Performance. Bethesda, Maryland: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 006 723, 1972.

38. Thomas, Walter L. The Thomas Self-Concept Values Test, Revised Edition. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Educational Service Company, 1969.

39. Toller, Gladys. "Certain Aspects of Self-Evaluations by Achieving and Retarded Readers of Average and Above Average Intelligence," Dissertation Abstracts, 28, Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, A Xerox Company, 1967-1968, p. 976-A.

40. Warburton, Frank W. "Attainment and the School Environment." In Stephen Wiseman (Ed.), Education and Environment. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1964.

41. Wattenberg, William and Clifford, Clare. "Relations of Self-Concept to Beginning Achievement in Reading," Child Development, June 1964, 35, 466-467.

42. Weber, Lillian. The English Infant School and Informal Education. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971.

43. Williams, Jean H. "The Relationship of Self-Concept and Reading Achievement in First Grade Children," The Journal of Educational Research, April 1973, 66, 378-380.

44. Williams, Robert L. and Cole, Spurgeon. "Self-Concept and School Achievement," Personnel and Guidance Journal, January 1968, 46, 478-481.